

Message Text

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TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 191892 TOSEC 080347

NODIS

WHITE HOUSE FOR Z BRZEZINSKI

FOLLOWING REPEAT MOSCOW 11719 ACTION SECSTATE

USDEL SECRETARY 12 AUG 77

QUOTE

S E C R E T MOSCOW 11719

NODIS

FOR SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR TOON

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, US, XF

SUBJECT: REPLY TO SOVIET DEMARCHE ON MIDDLE EAST

REF: (A) STATE 187015 (TOSEC 080208); (B) MOSCOW 11442;

(C) SECTO 8131; (D) STATE 190655 (TOSEC 080316)

SUMMARY: THE FOLLOWING IS A READOUT OF A 75 MINUTE CALL I

SECRET

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MADE ON ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER KUZNETSOV ON AUGUST 12 AS A
DEMARCHE PARALLEL TO THAT BY DEPUTY SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER TO
VOLSEV ON AUGUST 11 (REF D). END SUMMARY.

1. KUZNETSOV RECEIVED ME AT 5 PM ON AUGUST 12. I OPENED BY
EXPLAINING THAT I WAS MAKING THIS PARALLEL APPROACH BECAUSE
WE WANTED MOSCOW TO UNDERSTAND THE DEPTH OF OUR CONCERN
REGARDING VASEV'S AUGUST 6 DEMARCHE AND BECAUSE WE WANTED
TO MAKE SURE THAT OUR RESPONSE WOULD GET THROUGH VERY CLEARLY.
I THEN READ THE TALKING POINTS OUTLINED IN REF A AS AMENDED

BY THE DELETION RECOMMENDED IN REF B. THEN I EXPRESSED MY OWN CONCERN THAT THE LINE TAKEN BY THE SOVIET PRESS WAS UNHELPFUL AND NON OBJECTIVE. FOR EXAMPLE:

--THE AUGUST 11 TASS ITEM CARRIED IN AUGUST 12 PRAVDA STATING INTER ALIA: "IT IS NOTED THAT THE EGYPTIAN PROPOSAL TO SET UP A 'WORKING GROUP', WHICH EMERGED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TALKS, IS INDICATIVE OF A FRESH ATTEMPT BY THE USA AND ISRAEL WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF SOME ARAB COUNTRIES TO EXCLUDE THE PLO FROM A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT, TO REPLACE THE GENEVA CONFERENCE ITSELF WITH A DIFFERENT ORGAN ALSO WITHOUT PARTICIPATION OF THE SOVIET UNION."

--AN EQUALLY TENDENTIOUS ARABIC LANGUAGE MOSCOW BROADCAST ON AUGUST 1 -- MADE ONLY TWO DAYS AFTER SECRETARY VANCE SO THOROUGHLY BRIEFED VASEV -- CHARGING THAT THE US DOES NOT TAKE A BALANCED APPROACH TO THE ME QUESTION (SEE FBIS). THESE AND OTHER SOVIET PRESS ITEMS CONSTITUTED, I SAID, A GROSS DISTORTION OF THE US POSITION AND OF THE EFFORTS WE WERE MAKING TOWARD A RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM.

2. AFTER I PASSED HIM A NON PAPER CONTAINING THE TALKING SECRET

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POINTS, KUZNETSOV SAID THAT FRANKLY HE HAD EXPECTED THAT ON THIS OCCASION I WOULD BE GIVING HIM A DETAILED REPORT OF THE VANCE VISIT SO THAT THE SOVIET SIDE COULD GAIN AN APPRECIATION OF THE SITUATION WITH A VIEW TO FORMULATING APPROPRIATE STEPS FOR JOINT EFFORTS IN IMPLEMENTING RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338 WHICH PLACE RESPONSIBILITIES ON THE CO-CHAIRMAN. HE HOPED THAT SUCH A DETAILED REPORT WOULD SOON BE FORTHCOMING. I ASSURED HIM THAT IT WOULD SOON AFTER SECRETARY VANCE HAD PRESENTED HIS REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT.

3. KUZNETSOV THEN ASKED FOR A CLEARER UNDERSTANDING OF THE US POSITION ON WORKING GROUPS. THE SOVIETS HAD READ IN THE PRESS THAT THEY WOULD CONSTITUTE CONSULTATIONS ON THE ME WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF THE ARAB STATES BUT WITHOUT THE PARTICIPATION OF THE PLO AND THE SOVIET UNION. COULD I CONFIRM THAT THE US HAD DENIED THIS? OR WAS THE PROPOSAL FOR CONSULTATIONS IN A NEW, SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT FORM? I SAID THE PRECISE ANSWER WOULD HAVE TO COME FROM SECRETARY VANCE. THE WORKING GROUP CONCEPT WAS AN IDEA THAT EMERGED IN CAIRO IN CONVERSATIONS WITH SADAT AND I UNDERSTOOD THAT SYRIAN PRESIDENT ASSAD HAD REJECTED THE PROPOSAL. IN ANY EVENT, THERE HAD CERTAINLY BEEN NO US INTENTION TO EXCLUDE THE USSR FROM THE PROCESS; RATHER SECRETARY VANCE INTENDED TO KEEP THE USSR FULLY INFORMED.

3. KUZNETSOV ASKED WHETHER I HAD ANY DETAILED INFORMATION WHICH COULD ALLAY SOVIET CONCERNS. WHAT WAS THE US REACTION TO SADAT'S PROPOSAL? THERE WAS A PRESS REPORT THAT WHEN QUERIED ON SOVIET PARTICIPATION IN THE WORKING GROUPS SECRETARY VANCE HAD FIRMLY REPLIED IN THE NEGATIVE, AT LEAST AS FAR AS THE INITIAL STAGE OF THE WORKING GROUP WAS CONCERNED. "WE HAVE NEVER HEARD A US DENIAL OF THIS REPORT. NOW OUR PEOPLE ARE STARTING TO ASK QUESTIONS. HOW ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND THE SECRET

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HULLABALLOO? WE HAVE GROUNDS FOR EXPRESSING OUR CONCERNS.

4. I SAID THAT WITH DUE RESPECT, THE SOVIETS WERE MISSING THE POINT. IF THEY HAD QUESTIONS THEY SHOULD FIRST ASK US RATHER THAN MAKING SUCH AN INTEMPERATE DEMARCHE AS VASEV'S OF AUGUST 6. IN MY VIEW, KUZNETSOV'S QUESTION WAS NO LARGELY ACADEMIC BECAUSE CERTAIN PARTIES DIRECTLY INVOLVED HAD TURNED DOWN THE WORKING GROUP PROPOSAL. THERE WAS NOW THE PROSPECT OF INDIRECT CONSULTATIONS IN NEW YORK, POSSIBLY THROUGH SECRETARY VANCE OR ANOTHER INTERMEDIARY. IN ANY CASE WE WOULD KEEP THE SOVIETS INFORMED.

5. KUZNETSOV ASKED AN AIDE TO BRING HIM A COPY OF THE INSTRUCTIONS TO VASEV. HE SAID HE BELIEVED VASEV HAD ACTED WITHIN THESE INSTRUCTIONS AND HAD NOT EXCEEDED THEM. THEY WERE SIMPLY A SERIES OF QUESTIONS POSED TO ELICIT INFORMATION ON REMARKS MADE BY SECRETARY VANCE DURING HIS TRIP ON THE WORKING GROUP ISSUE. THERE WAS NOTHING NECESSARILY WRONG WITH THE IDEA OF WORKING GROUPS PER SE, BUT WHILE HE WAS PREPARED TO AWAIT A REPORT FROM SECRETARY VANCE ON THIS ISSUE, THE SOVIETS SHOULD NOT BE EXCLUDED. REVIEWING THE INSTRUCTIONS TO VASEV, HE SAID VASEV HAD BEEN TOLD TO ASK HOW TO INTERPRET THE PRESS STORIES AND IF THE US INTERPRETATION WAS AS GIVEN IN THE PRESS, THEN VASEV SHOULD PRESENT THE SOVIET VIEW -- THAT THIS WAS NOT A COURSE TO ADVANCE OR ACCELERATE THE RECONVENING OF THE MEPC BUT ONE WHICH BARRED IT. FOR INSTANCE, WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE TIMING OF THE MEPC SECRETARY VANCE HAD REPORTEDLY REPLIED THAT IT WAS UNREASONABLE TO THINK OF RECOVERING IT THIS YEAR AND THERE WAS NO US DENIAL OF THIS. "IF SECRET

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YOU NOW TELL ME THAT THE US POSITION ON RECONVENING THE GENEVA CONFERENCE REMAINS AS FORMULATED IN THE MAY GROMYKO-VANCE COMMUNIQUE, THAT IS ONE THING BUT YOU HAVEN'T. THE QUESTION IS, DOES THE US POSITION

REMAIN THE SAME?"

6. I SAID OUR POSITION WAS THE SAME. SECRETARY VANCE HAD TOLD THE PRESS DURING HIS CURRENT TRIP THAT HE HOPED THE MEPC COULD BE RECONVENED THIS YEAR, BUT THERE WERE DIFFICULTIES. I THEN ADDED THAT I HAD MY OWN VIEWS ON THE VASEV DEMARCHE BUT THESE WERE NOT IMPORTANT: WHAT WAS IMPORTANT WAS SECRETARY VANCE'S VIEW AND THAT WAS WHAT I WAS HERE TO CONVEY.

7. I THEN TOLD KUZNETSOV THAT WITH HIS PERMISSION I WISHED TO RAISE ONE OR TWO QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE CURRENT SOVIET POSTURE. PALESTINIAN SOURCES IN THE MIDDLE EAST HAD REPORTEDLY SAID -- AND I DID NOT KNOW THE VALIDITY OF THESE SOURCES -- THAT THE SOVIETS HAD SENT A LETTER TO ARAFAT SUPPORTING THE PLO POSITION AND STATING THAT THE USSR WOULD NOT ATTEND THE MEPC IF THE PLO WERE NOT THERE. THESE SOURCES HAD ALSO REPORTED THAT ARAFAT WOULD SOON BE VISITING MOSCOW, PROBABLY BEFORE THE END OF AUGUST. I ASKED FOR HIS COMMENT NOTING THAT WE RECOGNIZED THAT THE SOVIETS HAD A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PLO AND WE HOPED THEY WOULD INFLUENCE THE PLO'S POSITION VIS-A-VIS ISRAEL AND RESOLUTION 242.

8. KUZNETSOV REPLIED THAT THE SOVIET POSITION ON PLO PARTICIPATION IN THE MEPC WAS UNCHANGED. IT SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE MEPC "FROM THE VERY BEGINNING ON AN EQUAL FOOTING WITH ALL OTHER PARTICIPANTS." AS TO THE FORM OF PLO REPRESENTATION, THAT WAS FOR THE PLO TO DECIDE IN CONSULTATION WITH THE ARAB STATES. RE A POSSIBLE ARAFAT VISIT TO MOSCOW, THE MATTER WAS UNDER CONSIDERATION. IT WAS ON THE AGENDA. THE DATE HAD
SECRET

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STILL NOT BEEN FIXED AND HE COULD NOT YET TELL ME HOW THE MATTER WOULD BE RESOLVED.

9. KUZNETSOV THEN RAISED TWO POINTS:

A) THE WORKING GROUP ISSUE, HE SAID, TOUCHED ON A CONSTANT, VERY IMPORTANT, QUESTION OF HOW TO GET A ME SETTLEMENT. 5473, THE US STATES THAT IT STANDS FOR AND IS STRIVING TOWARD AN EARLY RECONVENING OF THE MEPC. HOWEVER, "I MUST STATE OPENLY WE ARE GETTING THE IMPRESSION THAT THE US GOVERNMENT SAYS ONE THING AND THEN TAKES ACTION POINTED IN QUITE AN OPPOSITE DIRECTION. IF WE ANALYZE THE COURSE OF EVENTS, YOUR ACTIONS AND THE CONTACTS WE HAVE WITH YOU, THEN OBJECTIVELY SPEAKING THERE IS NO CONSISTENCY BETWEEN YOUR ACTIONS AND YOUR WORDS. THESE ARE MY VIEWS. I KNOW YOU WILL DISAGREE, BUT WE DON'T GET FROM US REPRESENTATIVES CONCRETE SUGGESTIONS ON HOW THE CO-CHAIRMAN SHOULD JOIN THEIR EFFORTS TO PAVE THE WAY FOR RECONVENING THE GENEVA

CONFERENCE. THE US SEEMS TO RETAIN THE POSITION OF A DISTANT/OUTSIDE ("POSTORANIY") OBSERVER". MEANWHILE THE NEW ISRAELI LEADERSHIP IN SETTING FORTH ITS VIEWS OF AN ME ME SETTLEMENT SEEMS EVEN MORE RIGID THAN THE PREVIOUS ISRAELI ADMINISTRATION. THEY COMPLETELY CLOSE THE DOOR TO PLO PARTICIPATION AND THEY REJECT THE IDEA OF A PALESTINIAN HOMELAND ("OCHAG"). AND YET THE US DOES NOT EXPRESS ITS ATTITUDE TOWARD THESE STATEMENTS. "WE HAVE NEVER READ A WORD OF US CRITICISM ON THAT."

B) HE WANTED TO EMPHASIZE WITHOUT GREAT ELABORATION THAT THE SOVIET AWAIT FROM US NOT ONLY INFORMATION ABOUT WHO WENT WHERE AND WHO SAID WHAT TO WHOM BUT ALSO WHAT WAS THE US ATTITUDE TOWARD JOINT US-SOVIET ACTION IN WORKING TOGETHER TOWARD RECONVENING THE MEPC, TOWARD "CROSSING SECRET

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TO THE NEXT STAGE", E.G. HOW TO RESOLVE PROCEDURAL QUESTIONS AND THE QUESTION OF REPRESENTATION." "I AM GIVING YOU MY THOUGHTS OPENLY; I DON'T DEMAND YOUR IMMEDIATE RESPONSE."

10. ASSURING KUZNETSOV THAT I WOULD REPORT HIS REMARKS AND QUESTIONS IN FULL, I REPLIED THAT I WOULD SIMPLY SAY THAT I COULD NOT AGREE WITH HIS CHARACTERIZATION OF OUR POSTURE. AS TO HOW WE COULD WORK TOGETHER AND PROCEED FORWARD, THAT WAS ONE OF THE PROBLEMS TO WHICH SECRETARY VANCE WOULD DEVOTE PRIME ATTENTION. HE COULD BE SURE THAT WE WOULD CONVEY OUR VIEWS TO THE SOVIETS IN DETAIL BOTH IN WASHINGTON AND IN MOSCOW. MEANWHILE, I WOULD REMIND KUZNETSOV THAT THE SELECTION AND NEGATIVE INTERPRETATION OF NEWS REPORTS BY SOVIET MEDIA WAS DISTORTED AND UNHELPFUL AND I HOPED THAT THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT WOULD TAKE CORRECTIVE MEASURES.

11. KUZNETSOV CLOSED BY ASSURING ME THAT, REFLECTING THE WILL OF THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP, MFA WOULD DO ALL IT COULD UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES TO IMPROVE RELATIONS AND COOPERATION WITH THE US. ON THAT (QUESTIONABLE) ASSURANCE THE CONVERSATION CLOSED.

12. COMMENT: THIS WAS THE CLEAREST INDICATION YET OF THE DEEP SOVIET CONCERN, I WOULD SAY OBSESSION, OVER THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING CUT OUT OF THE ACTION. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THEY ARE CONCERNED ENOUGH TO REALLY EXERT PRESSURE ON THE PLO RE RESOLUTION 242. I STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT WE CONTINUE THE DUAL TRACK APPROACH IN PRESSING THEM TO CEASE THEIR ACCUSATORY APPROACH AND TO LEAN ON THE PLO AS WELL AS THEIR OTHER EXTREMIST ARAB CLIENTS.
TOON
UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

SECRET

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